



## **Wounded Spirits, Ailing Hearts 4 Overview with Hosts Written Video Transcript**

Then I came home after 18 months. Came home, got off in San Francisco. I didn't come home, I didn't come straight home. [00:01.40.00] I just, I just couldn't. There was something wrong, something missing.

I wanted to, you know, get in, you know, find out what's going on. But it was like he was keeping it to himself. It was probably the war.

When my son [00:02.00.00] was born it made me look at reality. It made me look at I got a child. I decided I better do something about myself.

Sam Loudhawk's experience is common to many American Indian and Alaskan Native veterans. Answers to the concerns he has about his life [00:02.20.00] today can be traced to service in Vietnam 25 years ago. This is his story and that of many other Native American combat veterans, male as well as female, Vietnam and other eras. Hello, my name is (Spiro) Manson. I direct the Division of American Indian and [00:02.40.00] Alaskan Native Programs in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center.

And I'm Peter Montgomery, medical director of the PTSD residential rehabilitation program at the Denver VA medical center, previously with the Indian Health Service and a Vietnam theater veteran. [00:03.00.00] Through a recent study by (Spiro's) center and our clinical work at the VA we've learned that Native American veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder in ways that are the same and that are different than the veterans in other ethnic groups.

In 1996, my colleagues [00:03.20.00] and I completed a major study of PTSD and related psychiatric disorders. It's called the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project. The study was based on careful science and personal interviews with 621 Vietnam combat veterans from some of the largest tribes in the country. We found that almost [00:03.40.00] 27% of the Southwest and 31% of the Northern Plains veterans suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. That is twice the rate reported among white Vietnam veterans in a similar study. And 45% of the Southwest and 57% of the Northern Plains [00:04.00.00] veterans in our study have suffered from PTSD at some time in their lives. Among Northern Plains veterans the rate is close to three times the number of their white counterparts. We also discovered that more than 7% of these Native men abuse or are dependent on alcohol. [00:04.20.00] The rate of alcohol abuse among participants in the American Indian Vietnam Veterans Project is two to six times greater than among other groups of veterans. Yet, many American Indian Alaska Native veterans don't know what PTSD is or why it's so debilitating. But there is help and there is hope. [00:04.40.00]



Native American men, women and families are successfully facing and overcoming PTSD with the help of their communities and health care agencies including the VA. Our goal today is to share information with those of you in the mental health field that may assist [00:05.00.00] the effort to make these veterans' lives whole again. But before we get too deeply into the PTSD diagnostic criteria it may be helpful to first provide a little context. American Indians and Alaska Natives are certainly no strangers to war. Historically and culturally [00:05.20.00] the Native American warrior tradition is powerful. The warrior honors an honored place in native families communities and cultures. Throughout the 20th century Native Americans served in the U.S. Armed Forces. There are detailed records of Native Americans in World War I, World War II and every major and minor [00:05.40.00] military conflict since. In fact, statistics show that American Indians and Alaskan Natives are overrepresented in the U.S. military. While Native Americans represent a relatively small proportion of the population, between 20% and 30% of their men are military veterans. [00:06.00.00] That compares to approximately 10% of adult males in the general population. Thus, not only is the rate of PTSD high among Native combat veterans but its cost is terrible in human and financial terms among a significant segment of this population. And we [00:06.20.00] are learning why these costs are so much greater among Native Vietnam veterans. One of the most dramatic reasons is the shift in social and cultural worlds that stood everything that these men believed upside down.

[end of audio]

